Statement

The Storage Capacity (owned and hired/covered and Cap), available with the food Corporation of India during the last three years.

(Fig. in '000' tonnes)

Year (as on 31/3)	Covered			Cap (Open)			Grand Total
	Owned	Hired	Total	Owned	Hired	Total	
1995-96	12413.50	8252.35	20665.85	1602.46	4141.94	5744.40	26410.25
1996-97	12422.67	7053.58	19476.25	1493.62	1672.42	3166.04	22642.29
1997-98	12433.43	6726.05	19159.48	1553.35	1656.29	3209.64	22369.12

Delicensing Sugar Import

2822. SHRI BRAHMAKUMAR BHATT: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item appearing in the Times of India, (Ahmedabad) dated the 28th November, 1998 under the caption, Delicensing imports may cripple State's sugar industry;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether import of sugar under OGL will pose a serious threat to the Gujarat State's sugar industry run by farmers' co-operatives;

(d) whether the National Federation of Sugar Industry in Gujarat has taken up the matter with the Central Government for protection of the interests of the farmers; and

(e) if so, the action taken or proposed to be taken by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In the news report, it has been mentioned, inter-alia, that the imports of sugar under OGL have posed a serious threat to the State's Sugar Industry and cooperative sector is perturbed over the delicensing of sugar as the big industrial houses could jeopardise the existing network of farmers cooperatives.

(c) No, Sir. Imports of sugar under OGL are unlikely to pose any serious threat to Gujarat's Sugar Industry.

(d) and (e) Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) and National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCSF) have represented to the Government to increase the customs duty on imports of sugar to 50%. The Government has increased the customs duty on import of sugar thrice in the financial year 1998-99. On 28.4.98, Government imposed a basic customs duty of 5% and countervailing duty of Rs. 850/- per tonne on imports of sugar. On 14.1.99, Government increased the customs duty on imports of sugar from 5% to 20%. With the change in customs duty rate structure in the Budget Proposals for the financial year 1999-2000, the customs duty on imports of sugar stands revised to 25% along with surcharge of 10% with effect from 28.2.99. The countervailing duty of Rs. 850/- per tonne will also continue.

Storage shortage for Kharif Crop

2823. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a serious storage shortage for the coming Kharif crop;

(b) whether this shortage has arisen because of imported stock of Australian wheat in the godowns;

(c) if so, why Australian wheat was imported when there was enough wheat in the country; and

(d) what steps are being taken to increase the storage capacity so that farmers do not suffer?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) The Food Corporation of India is having adequate storage capacity of 23.62 million tonnes against stocks held at 15.84 million tonnes as on 1.2.99.

Further the Field Officers of FCI have been delegated full powers to hire additional storage capacity from State Government/CWC/SWCs and private parties as per their requirement from time to time.

(c) Due to untimely rains, the Ministry of Agriculture had estimated less production of wheat during rabi season 1997-98 as compared to the immediately preceeding year. It was accordingly decided by the Government to import wheat from Australia to the tune of 15 lakh metric tonnes against which 14.15 lakh metric tonnes was actually received by November, 1998.

(d) The construction of storage capacity is a continous activity. Addition in storage capacity is being made year after year by FCI and other agencies keeping in view the specific requirements of the States and availability of funds.

Pending cases in Consumer Courts

2824. SHRI S. AGNIRAJ: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of cases pending in Consumer Courts, State-wise, and also in the National Consumer Redressal Forum;

(b) what steps are being taken for early disposal of such cases;

(c) whether all the verdicts are properly implemented; and

(d) if not, what steps are being taken for proper implementation of the Forum's Verdicts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) The number of cases pending in the National Commission, State Commissions & District Fora as on 1.4.99 are 6523, 58434 & 224037 respectively. The State-wise break-up for the State Commissions and District Fora is given in the statement (*See* below).

(b) Some of the steps taken by the Central Government for speedy disposal of pending cases by the consumer courts are as follows:

(i) To strengthen the infrastructure of the Consumer Courts, Central Government has provided one-time-grant of Rs. 61.8 crores to the State/UTs during 1995—99.

(ii) Central/State Governments and the National Commission are regularly monitoring the working of the consumer courts.

(iii) State/UT Governments have been requested to fill up the vacancies of Members/Presidents of various Consumer Courts on priority basis.

(iv) Central Government has written to State/UT Governments for ensuring the normal functioning and monitoring of these Courts on regular basis.

(c) and (d) The verdicts of the Consumer Courts are implemented as per the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. In case of non-compliance of any order, the aggrieved party can file an appeal in the same Consumer Court invoking Section 27 of the said Act.